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1—4.

STATE OF THE CASE
OF THE
Sail-Cloth Manufacturers
OF
GREAT-BRITAIN.

THAT, by an Act of the 12th Queen Anne, a Bounty was granted of 1*d.* per Ell on all Britiſh-made Canvas, "fit for, or made into Sails," on Exportation.

That, by an Act of the 4th of Geo. II. another Bounty was granted on all Britiſh-made Canvas, of 1*d.* per Ell, on Exportation.

That the Preambles to the ſaid Bills ſet forth the great Importance of the Sail-cloth Manufactory to this Country, the Neceſſity of its Encouragement; and that Sail-cloth (though made of Materials paying conſiderable Duties on Importation) received no Drawback on Exportation.

That the ſaid Acts granting the Bounty, have been continued from Time to Time, and will expire on the 29th of September, 1795, unleſs renewed in the then next Seſſion of Parliament.

That an Act was paſſed in the 9th Year of Geo. II. called *The Regulating Act*, confining the Manufacture of Britiſh Canvas to one particular Mode; in which the Warp is directed to be made with "double Threads," &c. &c. and inflicting the penalty of 6*d.* per Yard on all Canvas manu-

factured "essentially different, lighter, or inferior in Strength or Goodness thereto."

That it appears that the Intention of the Legislature in passing this Act, was to *encourage* the British Sail-cloth Manufactory, by inflicting Penalties on those who should use Foreign Sail-cloth, and by laying additional Duties thereon; and by this Regulation to make the Distinction of British and Foreign Sail-cloth more obvious to the Custom-House Officers; as the Sail-cloth of no other Country is made with double Warp. But the said Act no where mentions a Preference to Double Thread Sail-cloth on Account of superior Quality to the Single Cloth, as the Reason of such Regulation.

That the said Regulating Act was renewed from Time to Time, and expired on the 29th September last, unless renewed in this Session of Parliament.

That, notwithstanding the Existence of the above Regulating Act, and its Penalties, the Manufacture of Single Thread Canvas was then, and has continued to this Time, a flourishing Branch of the Canvas Manufacture in this Kingdom, and is now by much the most considerable Part of it; as appears from the Result of Enquiries in the Manufacturers hands, collected with as much Accuracy as has been in their Power.

That it has never been subjected to the Penalties of the Act, or denied the Bounties, till within these few last Months; having been always considered as not "essentially different in Strength or Goodness," as conforming to the same Weights, and every other

Regulation in the ſaid Act, and having a proportionate Number of Threads in the Warp.

That the Manufacturers, however, being ſubjected to the Caprice of the Cuſtom-Houſe Officers in the Interpretation of the Act, have applied to the Lords of the Treaſury, by Memorial, to ſuffer a Clauſe to the following Purport to be added to the Law, now expired, and about to be renewed,—viz.

" Provided that no Part of the Penalties in the " ſaid Act, which do not attach to Double Cloth, " ſhall extend to Canvas fit for, or made into Sails, " of the Manufacture of this Kingdom, made with " Single Thread Warps, which ſhall be deemed " Britiſh Sail-cloth, and be equally entitled to the " Bounty with Double Canvas, agreeably to the " Acts of Parliament for granting the ſame."

That the Manufacturers have met with unexpected Obſtructions from the Board of Trade, in their Application; and if their Petition ſhould not finally meet with Encouragement there, requeſt Mr. Advice as to what farther Steps may be proper to be purſued, to prevent the Injury they are likely to ſuſtain, and the Ruin of ſo eſſential a Manufacture to this Kingdom, with the Thouſand poor Families employed therein.

Reaſons for complying with the Manufacturers' Petition.

Becauſe it is impolitic to confine any Manufacture to a particular Mode, which damps Ingenuity, and precludes Improvement; and prevents the Purchaſers and Conſumers from exerciſing

their Humour or their Judgment in their Choice of the Article; and in this particular Caſe, ſends away all thoſe who prefer Single Canvas, to the Manufactures of Holland, Ruſſia, Ireland, and America (all which Countries make Canvas, and ſingle Canvas only), if this Manufacture be checked or deſtroyed.

The Sail-cloth Manufactory in this Kingdom, has always been, and muſt be allowed to be, of the utmoſt Importance to the Nation; that we may be able to fit out our own Navy, without depending on Supplies from other Nations; which, before the Exiſtence of the above Bounty Acts, was very much the Caſe, but is now, in a great Meaſure, done away, by the Effect of the Bounties encouraging the Manufactory to be carried on to much greater Extent, and now ſupplying our own Colonies, and other Countries.

That, as to the comparative Goodneſs of Double and Single Cloth; the Manufacturers think the Fact of the greater Part of the Manufacture in this Kingdom being of Single Cloth, is a Proof of the greater Encouragement *that* Branch has met with (particularly being made in the Face of an Act of Parliament inflicting the Penalty of 6*d*. per Yard on the Makers thereof, if the Act be ſo conſtrued), and in the price of the one being equal to that of the other. But the Petitioners on this Occaſion wiſh to make no Compariſons to the Prejudice of one or the other Sort; they are equally Manufacturers of both Sorts in general, and they are confident that the Encouragement given to one Sort is an Encouragement to the other, by affording

a Nurſery to the Workmen and enabling the Manufacturers to keep them together; which for theſe few Years paſt has been very difficult from the flouriſhing State of the Cotton and other Manufactures, which have advanced the Wages of making a Piece of Sail-cloth nearly half as much as was paid within theſe three Years, and notwithſtanding Sail-cloth is a declining Manufacture in many Parts of this Kingdom.

That if it be perſiſted in, that Double Canvas is the beſt Canvas, and the Manufacturers muſt decline making Single Canvas, they anſwer, that it is clear they cannot from this one plain Circumſtance: The Warp of a Piece of Single Canvas in Lancaſhire is ſpun by Girls of 10 Years old and upwards, of which a Spinner will ſpin three in one Week, and her Wages will be 9*s.* 9*d.*—If they *could* be turned to the old Mode of ſpinning the Double Warp, one Spinner would be two Weeks in ſpinning one Warp, and her Wages would be in one Week 3*s.* at moſt. How then can the Manufacturer expect to keep his Spinners, or turn them to the Double Manufacture?

If it be intended intirely to put down the Single Manufacture by putting the Act in force, What is to become of all theſe poor People employed in ſpinning, weaving, &c. of near 100,000 Pieces of Single Canvas yearly, and particularly at this Time, when they cannot be employed in the Cotton Manufactures? What is to become of the Ships of Great Britain deprived of this Quantity of Canvas, when the whole Export of the Kingdom is not 50,000 Pieces yearly, which would leave a Deficiency at Home of 40,000 Pieces at leaſt, as will appear in the ſucceeding Statement?

If it be intended to take Advantage of the Conſtruction lately put upon the Act by the Cuſtom-houſe Officers, and to refuſe the Bounty to all Single Canvas, but not to ſtop the Manufacture of it; what other Effect can this have but of cauſing all the Double Canvas to be exported in order to receive the Bounty to thoſe People who do not wiſh for it, but prefer Single Canvas; and of keeping the Single Canvas for Home Conſumption, though the Idea would in that Caſe be that the Double was the better Canvas, and therefore neither would there be any Bounty ſaved to Government?

Ought not the Hardſhip and ſerious Loſs to the Manufacturers of making Buildings for ſpinning ſingle Chains (which is not done in double Chains) on the Suppoſition that this Act did not affect them, and which the conſtant Practice at the Cuſtom-houſe (from the granting the ſaid Bounties till within the laſt ſix Months in two or three Ports only) of never refuſing the ſame was a Kind of Pledge in their favour, that the Single and Double Canvas deſerved equal Encouragement: We ſay ought not the Hardſhip of *their* Caſe to be conſidered, who under the Faith of theſe Things have laid out many Thouſand Pounds in the County of Lancaſter only within theſe few Years the better to carry on a Manufacture highly important to theſe Kingdoms, and encouraged by the Legiſlature.

From the beſt Accounts the Manufacturers can procure of the Quantity of Canvas manufactured in this Kingdom, about 150,000 Pieces are manufactured in England, of which Circa 90,000 are ſingle and 60,000 are double: And in Scotland

perhaps 60,000 are manufactured, of which about half are double and half ſingle: Almoſt all the Manufacturers make both double and ſingle to ſuit their Cuſtomers, and the different Climates where the Cloth is to be uſed, except in Somerſetſhire, where nearly all the Cloth is ſingle, and London, where nearly all the Cloth is double; and the different Memorials preſented the latter End of laſt Year to the Treaſury, are ſigned by almoſt all the Manufacturers in the Kingdom.

The Bounty paid in this Kingdom on Canvas for Exportation, it is apprehended, is not more than 10,000*l.* yearly on both Double and Single at moſt. In the Year 1791, it was only 8,100*l.* odd; the laſt Year's Accounts are not yet made up at the Cuſtom Houſe. If one-fourth of that Exportation is double, 7,500*l.* is received as Bounty by Single Canvas. But Canvas is divided by Weight into ten Numbers, of which the four laſt are allowed by the regulating Act to be Single, which being deducted leaves only 4,500*l.* yearly, to be paid for the Single Canvas not made according to that Act; *but which has hitherto been paid*. And the Queſtion of Policy is (independent of the ſerious Conſequences to the Nation, the Manufacturer and the Workman, in ſuppreſſing the Manufacture of 100,000 Pieces of Single Canvas yearly), whether the Sum of 4,500*l.* to be paid in Bounty as above, is not compenſated by the Duties on Hemp and other Articles employed in the Manufacture, in the Trade to Ruſſia and elſewhere for thoſe Articles, and the ſhips and Seamen employed in that Trade.

All Britiſh Linens of the Value of Sixpence per Yard, receive a Bounty of Three Halfpence per Yard, nearly equivalent to the Sail Cloth Bounty; and the Value of the Sail Cloth, for which the Manufacturers petition is 13*d.* to 14*d.* per Yard on the Average.

The Iriſh grant an equal Bounty, even to this Country; and their Manufacture is nearly all, if not entirely Single.

If it be required that the Single Canvas ſhould be *corded* in the ſame Manner as Double Cloth, as recommended by the Navy Board; nothing is more eaſy to the Manufacturers, and it is no additional Expence to them; but the Merchant Service diſapproves it in general.

The Manufacturers therefore petition, that the Bounty on Double and Single Canvas may go Hand in Hand, as they have hitherto done to the Expiration of the Bounty Acts in 1795.—And that the Lords of his Majeſty's Treaſury would either be pleaſed to give Directions to the Officers of his Majeſty's Cuſtoms for admitting Single Threaded Sail Canvas to the Bounty, as "no Ways eſſentially different, or inferior in Strength or Goodneſs;" or that they would ſuffer a Clauſe to the Purport of the one herein before-mentioned to be inſerted in the Act now expired, and about to be renewed; which latter Plan, though an Expence to them, the Manufacturers would prefer, that they might not in future lie at the Mercy of the Informer, or the Cuſtom Houſe Officer.

London, March 20th, 1793.

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